

FREEDOM, FELLOWSHIP AND CHARACTER IN RELIGION

UNITY

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U N I T Y

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Editorial Comments

UR first major plunge into Unitarian politics was to join the crusade for the election of Frederick May Eliot president of the American Unitarian Association. Here was a man whose dynamic leadership as Chairman of the Commission of Appraisal and co-author of its report "Unitarians Face a New Age" challenged the youthful, energetic and idealistic Unitarians of the middle thirties. His inauguration as President began a new Unitarian era. It has been an era of growing regional responsibility, expansion, and advance on many fronts. The stunning suddenness of his death is mitigated only by the fact that the memory and the momentum carry on.

We congratulate the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association on the intelligent and judicious way they met the sobering challenge of finding a successor to Dr. Eliot. Dr. Ernest W. Kuebler, the Board Nominee, is eminently qualified for the post. His leadership resulted in the development of an outstanding Division of Education and the unsurpassed Beacon Curriculum. As Administrative Vice-President he became thoroughly familiar with the eccentricities of Unitarian or-

ganization and its complicated executive responsibilities. He has demonstrated an understanding of, and a sensitivity to, the intricacies and delicacies of the interrelationships of autonomous affiliated organizations including the rapidly growing, dynamic, and self-conscious Regions. Dr. Kuebler's present position as Administrator of the Council of Liberal Churches and Director of its major Division of Education provides for him an unequalled knowledge of the possibilities, probabilities, and problems of Unitarian-Universalist merger. We are confident that he will serve the Unitarian Movement with efficiency, effectiveness, and distinction. We wish him every success for election and in the fulfillment of his tasks.

Recently we heard a subtle and circuitous rationalization for liberal religionists to stay within the Christian tradition in order that we might "save" Christianity. This was the dream of early Unitarians who joined with Martineau in thinking that all intelligent and rational people would ultimately become Unitarians. Theodore Parker's idealistic and famous sermon on "The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity" is cited profusely to uphold this position.

It seems to this writer that the small dent made by liberals on the main body of Christianity over the last century and a half calls for a new approach. We need to recognize the permanency of the so-called transient, eschew it, and get back to the fundamental values found among all religious peoples.


A news release by the *Christian Herald*, announcing an article dealing with Sputniks, space travel, and theology, intrigued us. While we have not read the article yet, the mere announcement titillated our cerebral crevices. We thought of Leonardo da Vinci's whimsical and heretical prophecies of travel through the air and under the sea. Science has made Jules Verne a minor prophet and Buck Rogers seem quite plausible. Then we thought of how men have always created their gods in their own image and located them where they were easily accessible but not *too* handy. It has been fascinating to watch the theologians during the last fifty years evicting God from one habitat after another until he has become a ghost-like specter haunting man's growing domain, omnipresent but never seen. The dark cellars in which the theologians find the black cat that is not there are being lighted, and heaven is having a difficult

time remaining tangential to this expanding universe. But have confidence in the theologians. They will discover new gods who will claim the loyalty of men until some thirtieth or fortieth century Einstein provides us with a new formula for unlocking the mysteries of the universe.

In the last issue of *UNITY* we published a "credo" by the late Dr. James Peter Warbasse titled "On Belief and Hope." In this issue we present a "credo" entitled "This I Believe," by Dr. Paul Arthur Schilpp. We prize the friendship of this fascinating philosopher from Northwestern University. He has made many contributions to the field of philosophy, the most recent of which is his monumental undertaking of editing the multi-volumed series, *The Library of Living Philosophers*. He was recently introduced to a large Chicago audience as "a Methodist by adoption and a Unitarian by marriage." In discussions with your editor he has referred to himself as a "Theistic Humanist." To many this would seem a contradiction of terms. That most of his "I Believes" are humanist is true. Whether his concept and use of the symbol "God" make him theistic, we leave to you and your theological referent.

This I Believe

PAUL ARTHUR SCHILPP

 *believe* in a universe of law and order, which—because it is lawful and orderly—yields to the comprehension and understanding of an orderly mind. And, because I find the universe orderly—

I believe in a personal God: the purposeful, creative, intelligent mind at work in the universe; a God who is best understood as rational purposive intelligence, even though we recognize that our finite comprehension can never hope to encompass Him or to fathom His real nature.

I believe in Man, the highest point yet reached in the creative process: man, organically speaking, an animal, yes; but by his capacities for abstract rational reflection, for passing moral judgments and making moral choices, and for spiritual self-transcendence, head and shoulders above all other animals.

I believe that, endowed as man is with rational-moral-spiritual capacities, it is possible for him (both individually and in the group) to develop these capacities to ever higher degrees; a development to which I can see no limits.

I believe that man can also increasingly learn to use his rational-

moral-spiritual capacities in behalf of his own personal improvement as well as in behalf of social betterment—and that, in this process, man is co-creator with God in the production of ever finer and nobler types of personalities.

I believe that man can tap the divine powers available to him in this process in much the same sort of fashion in which he can learn (and has learned) to tap the powers in the physical universe and use the electric and atomic powers there available for all sorts of purposes.

I believe that every human problem is capable of a rational and moral solution; and that, inas much as man is the proud possessor of rational and moral capacities, there exists no reason why he should not be able increasingly to master all the problems he may meet.

I believe that reason has been and always will be a tremendous aid to man in meeting issues as they come along; although reason, by itself, is *never* enough.

I believe that, as a being with a capacity for moral judgment, man has it in him increasingly to develop what Immanuel Kant called “a good will.” I believe

that man's good will is another indispensable aid to man's individual and social progress.

I believe, therefore, that what the world needs is the use of rational intelligence coupled with or harnessed to a good will; a good will, that is to say, which is rationally directed. (As Bertrand Russell put it: "The good life is one guided by knowledge and inspired by love.")

I believe, specifically, that—given today's atomic age and the possibility of completely destroying civilization on this planet by the use of atomic weapons of mass-destruction—the application of a good will *and* of rational intelligence to today's world situation requires the creation of world law, applicable to all in-

dividuals and societies, under a world government.

I believe that the future of mankind's fate is—however minutely, nevertheless really—dependent upon what *I* think, believe, and do. I am tired of hearing the same old excuse: "What can I do? After all, I am only one." What if Socrates, Lincoln, Gandhi, and Schweitzer had used that alibi?

I believe, finally, that no man is ever greater than the cause which he espouses. When the young Lincoln saw his first slave-market, he is reported to have said under his breath: "If ever I get a chance to hit this thing, I'll hit it hard." Lincoln had found his cause. Tell me what your cause is, and I will tell you who you are.

Humanistic Theology

GARDNER WILLIAMS

THEOLOGY should be clarified by discussion. Most Unitarian church services express reverence and devotion to God in liturgy and sermon. The inspiration of these services must not be lost. However, being officially encouraged to believe and express what we think is really true, many of us reject all supernaturalism and recognize that the cosmic process

is purely natural, causal, and basically non-purposive. Chemical and biological events occurring on earth, and probably elsewhere, have unintentionally produced purposive living organisms, among which is man. This involves a creative evolutionary causation whereby one energy structure produces another, the latter sometimes having new qualities, such as life, consciousness,

reason, culture, free will, moral responsibility, a passion for justice, a love of truth, an appreciation of beauty, and a devotion to the ideal of man's highest good. The laws of causation do not need to be violated or changed in order that genuine novelty may be naturally produced.

Where does the God of our Unitarian liturgical services fit into this scientific-naturalistic-humanistic picture? I do not think that we need to be vague. I shall suggest an interpretation of these things which I think an enlightened person can accept without any intellectual qualifications whatever.

Two factors in the traditional God-concept are falsely identified as one. Both are genuine but they are in fact distinct. These are (1) God the holy spirit or principle of man's highest good; and (2) what has been called God the Father, and what actually is the creator, the supreme being (the foundation existence of the universe or substantial core of nature, probably energy or some physical substance underlying energy). For the sake of clarity and a purer inspiration, it would be better not to apply the term God to the supreme being. "Being" here is the present participle of the verb "to be," and may refer either to animate or inanimate beings

which are, exist, or "be." Probably the supreme being has always existed and will always exist. It did not need to be created. I think that it is strictly the same or identical with itself through all time. The laws of causation are manifestations of its permanent intrinsic nature. This being is the ultimate force or substance which has created everything except itself. German idealistic philosophers called it the metaphysical absolute, and wrongly regarded it as intrinsically spiritual. It has unintentionally created all the good and all the evil in existence. Whatever does evil is instrumentally evil. The metaphysical absolute is partly evil. We should not worship it. To worship evil is idolatrous. Let us not call the supreme being God. But we should be piously grateful to it for all of our blessings. It is the creative non-purposive force which has made us what we are by the chemical origin of life and by biological and cultural evolution. According to primitive supernaturalistic standards, this is atheism. But let us not be primitive.

Man's ultimate religious aspiration can be rationally directed only toward the highest good, which is a principle, not a force. All force does some evil. The principle here is long-range satis-

faction or fulfillment in individual living. The individual is ultimate spiritually. The principle or ideal of the highest good is that—and that alone—to which, without any qualification whatever, man can give the last full measure of devotion. This ideal is the principle of divinity. It is the only correct meaning of the word God. God is never fully actualized. Man can achieve only an approximation to it. God is never incarnate. The most basic truth of all true religion is that God does not actually exist. God is not a substance. God is a real potential principle which ought to exist but which, due to hereditary human frailty (original sin) can only exist fully in idea as an ideal. Man's first duty is to God. He strives to become one with God, but he fails. God and the supreme being are, in essence, a whole universe apart. There is nothing lower than the supreme being. It underlies everything. There is nothing higher than God. It is above all possibility of human achievement.

Most people do not know in how many meanings the word God has been used. It has often been consciously employed, and often subconsciously assumed, to

mean man's highest good. This meaning is a major factor in our orthodox theological tradition. Much of our tradition is primitive, but this part ought to be preserved. Aristotle said that God is man's highest good (*Metaphysics*, 1072 b). So did St. Thomas Aquinas (*Collected Works*, Random House Edition, Pegis editor; vol. 2 p. 27). So did John Dewey (*A Common Faith*, p. 42). So did George Santayana (*Reason in Religion*, pp. 156-158). So did Max Otto (*The Human Enterprise*, 1940, pp. 297 ff.). That God is man's highest good is an established principle in the Roman Catholic tradition. Descartes, in one of his letters to Queen Christina of Sweden, said that God is the highest good (20 Nov. 1647; see *Oeuvres* t. x. pp. 59-64; quoted in K. Fischer, *Descartes and His School*, London, 1887, p. 289).

My concept and terminology, then, is part of our tradition. I am convinced that, when people consciously think they are worshipping a supernatural father-personality, they are in fact subconsciously renewing their devotion to the principle of the good or of man's highest good. They are in need of an ideological psychoanalysis.

The Biological Basis for Humanism

LEO F. KOCH

THE NATURE of the evolutionary process, in which man arose, is a combination of random forces operating in a matrix of material forms which together constitute certain patterns of events that we call natural selection. Therefore, the drama of life on earth is not merely the product of a machine-like operation; nor is it the effect of a superintelligence experimenting with planets and stars. On the contrary, just as nonliving molecules, arranged in complex patterns and interacting in as yet mysterious fashion, gave rise to life, so too did invertebrate animals under the pressure of natural selection evolve into the ancestors of man among whom purpose was born.

The recognition that purpose as we know it arose in the process of organic evolution is at once also the awareness that man, insofar as he understands his own origin, is capable of directing his own future. Here indeed is the central concept of scientific Humanism. It is a faith in man's ability to learn about himself and his environment. In the long history of life, and in the startling technological developments of the last

three centuries, we are justified, I believe, in an optimistic view of man's ability, and therefore of a humanistic faith.

Unfortunately, many people are unnecessarily pessimistic about man's ability to use power wisely. It is true that the immediate outlook is not a rosy one. It may be that the dangers which confront us are commensurate in severity with the potentiality of our knowledge. But from the perspective of a billion years of history, man has just arrived upon the scene. As yet he is an apprentice in the art of living; still somewhat self-conscious about his recent rise to stardom on the stage of life, but already aware of the gravity of his present predicament and his poor preparation for that stardom. For one of the most profound insights into our own nature, which was provided by biology, is an awareness of the limitations as well as of the potentialities of man.

The very nature of man makes it impossible for him to be aware of more than a tiny fraction of the natural phenomena which compose the universe. Our nervous systems and sense receptors, in spite of their diversity and adaptability, are insensitive to the vast-

ness of the cosmos both in its total size and in the complexity of its smallest units. We see only a minute fragment of the spectrum of energy; the absence of that fragment spells darkness to us. Another minute fragment of it we can feel as heat, but most of it leaves us cold. As for matter itself, our bodies can relate themselves to a very small part of the earth and our solar system at one extreme, and at the other extreme, even dust particles, which are immense when compared to atoms, are impossible for us to grasp or control except with the most complicated and massive equipment. Utterly beyond the range of this space which we can see or sense with our biological capacities, is the vastness of other solar systems and galaxies beyond ours, and the entire realm of ultra-microscopic particles which make up molecules within us and our immediate environment.

From this inborn deficiency of our biological equipment come the distinctions which we make between matter and energy, between body and mind, and almost all of the other equally complex and perplexing problems which we associate with such dualistic expressions. This pattern of opposites, which is so deeply engrained into our language and culture, and which embodies so many irreconcilable dilemmas of

good and bad, of virtue and sin, of god and devil, still dominates our community mores and traditions. These archaic concepts are perpetuated by dogmatic, fundamentalistic religionists, who have not yet breathed the cleansing atmosphere of doubt.

Here is the tremendous responsibility of humanists, because unless they literally turn the other cheek, by responding to suspicion with understanding, by responding to hostility with sympathy, and by responding to ignorance with compassion, their only opportunity to influence social evolution is lost. Fortunately, this kind of opportunity knocks many times in our daily life. It knocks every time we encounter a neighbor in our yards; it knocks every time we exchange greetings with an acquaintance on the street; and it knocks particularly hard when we engage in a business transaction. Even though we may have contempt for ignorance and for superstition, we still can accord other human beings the respect and friendship which we ourselves treasure and value.

Logically, we have no choice but to be tolerant and generous once we understand the facts of biological existence and appreciate the fallibility of human intelligence. According to anthropologists, the great majority of us will grow up to be just as stupid as

our parents. For they tell us that the cave man of 25,000 years ago was every bit as intelligent as man today. Our progress in the meantime was made possible with the accumulation and inheritance of our social wealth, institutions, knowledge, and technology.

An awareness of the many pitfalls which beset our efforts at understanding ourselves and the universe leads us directly to one of the fundamental ethical principles of Humanism as well as of natural science. I refer to the tentative nature of knowledge. Tentativeness is a foothold in the ladder of knowledge; it is a stepping stone in the path of our social adaptability to a changing environment. Adaptation is one aspect of evolution and is the only certain way to prevent revolution. The greatest upheavals in the history of science as well as in civilization followed the times of strictest regimentation of ideas and behavior. The futile attempts of kings and priests to halt the tide of change only make that tide the more irresistible, and the following flood of revolution more violent.

But there is also a tyranny of the mind which may be self-imposed. By setting up a word or a symbol as a fetish or an object of worship, we lose our ability to criticise it. The ability to create is never separate from the ability

to destroy. We must never allow ourselves to be ruled by our own creations, whether they be words, machines, or imaginative perceptions. Language and ideas, like hammers and saws, exist to serve men, not to govern them; their value lies in their utility, not in their essence. Their abstractness renders them more difficult to understand, but also may contribute to their utility when the understanding has been achieved.

But most important of all we must not mistake abstractness for profundity; abstractions retain their value only as long as their connection with observable phenomena is clear. In spite of our natural allegiance to abstractions which have served us well in the past, we must learn to savor new ideas just as we would a new wine or food. For the future direction of social evolution depends upon the catalytic action of new ideas, new inspirations, new insights by means of which the recurring crises of evolving social systems may be solved.

Robert Maynard Hutchins, one-time president of the University of Chicago, is reported to have said of himself, "I was born the usual way." We might extend this saying by analogy to the origin of the species man, and say that he was born the usual way. The progress of man is manifest to all, but perhaps medi-

cine and surgery are without parallel as humanistic applications of science.

For example, I might point out that my three children were not born the usual way. All three of them were born by means of Caesarean sections. I mention this not as a matter of pride but rather to illustrate a principle. Man is a meddler; he is not satisfied that all men should be born the usual way. Since his origin, he has consistently tampered with, and influenced, the processes in which he arose. This fact is even more essential to an understanding of man than is an appreciation of his biological origin. From the latter we can gain some understanding of his past and present, but with the former we actually achieve an insight into man's future.

It is precisely the unique potentiality of man among the animals which provides the optimistic basis of Humanism as a philosophy. Humanism is life-affirmation rather than life-negation. Humanism is the enjoyment of a juicy steak as well as the gentle care of a cow and her calf; Humanism is the love of beauty in nature as well as the love of man; Humanism is the ecstasy of sex as well as the sacrifice of parents for their children. But life is not a bowl of cherries, and so Humanism, in addition to being the en-

joyment of health, love, and beauty, is also the endurance of suffering and resignation to death which is inevitable.

In the last analysis, humanists are realists in the sense that they are not repelled by natural events like suffering and death. By placing these phenomena in their proper perspective as necessary components of existence, offset as they are by happiness and birth, we can face them with composure and a measure of satisfaction. Were it not for individual death, there would not have been space on earth for its present inhabitants. Without death, evolution could not have occurred and man would never have come into existence. Even as we love our children, so too must we welcome death as the fulfillment of our lives and as our last and greatest contribution to the future of mankind.

For myself, I believe that Humanism as a philosophy of life is the natural outcome of the existence of a mature and healthy personality, just as scientific inquiry has been a natural development within a prosperous and free society. The potential role of Humanism in the life of individuals can be analogous to the role of science in society. One of the inspiring statements of the role and function of science in social evolution is that by Charles

Frankel, in his book, *The Case for Modern Man*:

For science, quite simply, is not a creed in competition with other creeds; it is not the view of a sect. It is a way of bringing all creeds to the test of certain common techniques and methods. And when we reject it for being provincial, we reject the one language which has been able effectively to cross boundaries and to draw men together. In the simplest terms, the only effective world community that now exists is the community of science. In this respect, if in no other, the vision of eighteenth-century liberal philosophers has been achieved. For the progress of science, as they saw, is not the progress of some one creed at the expense of others. It is the progress of a set of rules and procedures which allow men to coordinate their thinking and to cooperate in the search for truth.

The universality of Humanism as a philosophy of life, and of science as a means of solving prob-

lems, is inherent in the nature of man. The realization of the goals of Humanism and of science depends upon an adequate education of ourselves and of our children in the democratic tradition. Our greatest obstacle is authoritarianism, whether this be religious or political. I believe that this obstacle can be overcome if we humanists have the courage of our convictions. Once other people become aware of our purpose, and of the meaning of Humanism, and of science, they will affirm their necessity for the welfare of humanity. But to convince them of the meaning of these abstractions we must become dedicated to this task even as scientists are dedicated to the pursuit of truth. This involves a complete commitment and the danger of social ostracism. The path of social reform is not lined with primroses, and occasionally a sick society may vent its spleen upon an individual who insists upon surgery, when the patient merely desires some habit-forming drug upon which he has come to rely during the crises of his illness.

"The task of religion is to make the shared quest for the good life the controlling, unifying center of the human life process."

—A. Eustace Haydon.

Dogma Is Its Own Enemy—I*

SUNDER JOSHI

RELIGIOUS liberals have no creed or dogma! Are they justified in this?

Dogma and Scientific Method

The scientific method combines the methods of the natural and social sciences in order to reach rational conclusions based upon verifiable evidence. Therefore, the approach to religious questions will be from the point of view of experience itself. It is obvious that that which is beyond experience is also beyond evidence, at least in the present state of knowledge. This is not to say that future evidence of supposedly supernatural phenomena will not come within the realm of the natural in the years that lie ahead.

The liberal approach to religion is primarily based upon the open mind which is not closed to new evidence at any future date. Liberalism consists of reverence for the reverence of other people's religion. However, this does not mean that liberals revere what orthodoxy reveres. To have an open mind means that all our conclusions are subject to change provided there is enough new evi-

dence. We may understand all other religious positions but may not necessarily agree with them.

The important point to remember is that the scientific method stresses the law of change in all organisms and human institutions. History gives us first-rate evidence of this position, particularly in the field of religion. No society is ever static because life itself is always on the move.

Since this is true, the needs and desires of men under specific circumstances formulate the driving force for newer forms of religion. The founders of world religions have addressed themselves to the problems of the time and place in which they lived. Their solutions, whether religious or otherwise, took into consideration the context within which their teachings had to function. It is the life-situation which brought forth the kind of teaching or truth which they expressed in their day. Therefore, religious truth is true only when it is related to a certain time and place in a specific culture.

It is taken for granted that scientific method does not limit religion to theology but to the

*This is the first of a series of three articles on Dogma by Dr. Joshi.—Ed.

whole of life itself. And life is constantly moving, and not fixed. Therefore, any ideas of religion would naturally have to consider the fact that religion is a function of human life and not merely a fixed position reached by some people hundreds of years ago.

Since any truth is a product of the context of experience, which is constantly changing, nobody can divorce the truth from its context without losing the meaning of truth itself. It is obvious from this introduction that any idea or truth, which is fixed and unchanging, has no point of contact with the flow of human affairs. Dogma is a fixed opinion or truth or idea which is the child of a specific context of history. Such dogmas are solutions offered by men appropriate to the times in which they lived.

The tragedy of dogma is that it tries to superimpose a truth, which was true in the context of its time, upon the contexts of succeeding centuries when the circumstances which produced the earlier truth no longer exist. The result is that such a superimposed truth has a very hollow ring to it.

Since dogma defies almost all the fundamentals of scientific method, it can hardly presume to be rationally effective among people who do any critical thinking at all. By remaining rigid and fixed in a world of fluid

knowledge, it thereby becomes its own enemy. It drives people toward atheism and agnosticism by ignoring the new knowledge about the universe, the earth, and human nature, which was not available to the people who composed the scriptures in a pre-scientific and pre-democratic world of long ago. If the truth of 2000 years ago is still just as true concerning the universe and man, then modern knowledge is false. You cannot have two unique truths representing opposite positions.

Dogma and Psychology

Psychology has discovered that when an individual fails to move along the different levels of development from childhood on to maturity, a fixation occurs. Such fixations demand a great mental toll from a person. He becomes abnormal and fails to mature with the changing life. The mature adult must grow and adapt himself to changing challenges, otherwise his life is apt to become a failure. The mature individual must outdistance his childhood or adolescent stages of development if he is to remain normal at all. Security does not come to anybody in the mental field if he merely seeks security in the adolescent period of life when he is already a grown man.

Dogmas are mental fixations which are products of the infancy

of a culture from which many people refuse to budge. In many cases, religious abnormality is the general result. How long can adult man find security in his mental childhood without suffering the ravages of psychological fixations?

In this connection, it might be mentioned that the dogma of original sin has been challenged by psychology. In the first place, Augustine popularized the idea that we all suffer from Adam's sin. How can there be sin without the sinner? Besides, sin may be called misconduct in modern terminology. Whereas the dogmatist claims that sin is a transgression against the law of God (that is, an individual reaction against divine law), modern psychology says that misconduct is produced *not* by just individual reaction but by *interaction* of emotional, mental, social, and other conditioning factors. Either we believe in psychology or we do not.

Dogma and Archaeology

Archaeology has proved by actual evidence that some of the Bible statements are not unique or divinely revealed. In some of our museums and elsewhere, we have documentary evidence and artifacts to show that what was presumed to be dogmatically true has been definitely refuted. For

instance, the cuneiform tablets found at Nineveh representing the evidence of 2,000 B. C. show how the creation and flood stories were taken over from Babylonian legends.

On the side of literary evidence, relationship has been discovered between the Hebrew Decalogue and the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, at least some 500 years before Moses. This is also true of the Egyptian Book of the Dead where some of the commandments are comparable with the Ten Commandments. The Assyrian tablets (Nineveh) give us the Gilgamesh Epic and the Poem of Creation. Since these are earlier in time than Genesis itself, it is not presumptuous to assume a certain amount of borrowing. There is also evidence to show that Psalm 29 originally came from a Phoenician hymn, and that Psalm 104 looks surprisingly like the earlier Hymn to the Sun by the Egyptian Pharaoh Ikhнатon, who lived at least 100 years before Moses.

In the face of overwhelming evidence where archaeologists have proved borrowings and relationships between the Hebrew people and the Canaanites, Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, and many others, the dogmatist tells us that his is the unique truth given by God.

The Creative View and Vision

JOHN H. HERSHEY

THE DOCTRINES of Russian Communism as well as the orthodox theologies of such religions as Judaism and Christianity relate the individual to mankind and the universe, though of course in different ways. While millions accept one or the other of these views, many others do not. It may, therefore, be helpful to see how these latter could relate themselves to mankind and the universe in a way that would give greater meaning to their lives. To find some relation, if possible, would seem to be preferable to trying to live as isolated, independent beings. A view and vision that unites us with human society and the universe should take into account the discoveries of scientists, the idea of evolution, the spirit of democracy, the best moral teachings of the great religions, and the aspirations of many for a better social and world order. We shall attempt to outline a view and vision which may be called "creative."

Let us begin with the thought of the universe as creative. The word "creative" as used here does not mean making something from nothing, but rather making something new from what already

exists. By "universe" is meant the cosmos or nature, that is, the total reality, including the stars and the mind of man.

The universe is basically creative. Although decay and death do exist, it is difficult to see how this could be so unless something is first brought into being to undergo such change. Creation occurs, for example, in the forming of the various atoms from the primal hydrogen atom. Stars themselves are even now being born. Our star, the sun, transforms hydrogen atoms into helium atoms, producing heat and light. On our planet the lowest form of life probably arose from nonliving matter. Life itself takes two diverse directions in its development—plants and animals. Almost infinite seems their variety of forms. The green stuff of plants makes food by absorbing nonliving elements of air and soil. Back-boned animals—fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals including man—are developed with a nervous system and brain. The brain is the organ of the mind which takes different forms, from instinct to reason. Man, with his inherited mentality, becomes a creature capable of thinking logi-

cally, appreciating the beautiful, and recognizing moral standards. These capacities may be called man's spiritual nature because they refer to values and ideals.

A continuity of evolution thus seems to exist from the nonliving atoms to the human mind. Life, that is, evolves from the nonliving, and mind from life. Nonliving things, living beings, and mind make up the three chief levels of evolution on our planet. Inherent in these three levels is nature's creative power which brings forth the higher levels from the lower levels. For the religious person this power may be called by the ancient name of God.

Man, as indicated above, is a product of nature's creative power. But he is not merely a creature; he is also a creator. This is shown by the fact that he has used his powers inherited from nature to produce what did not exist on earth before him, that is, civilization and culture. The sculptor, Alexander Archipenko, says that "the individual cannot isolate his creativity from the rest of the universe, because it is, by its very character, exclusively derived from nature." Man has originated, individually or collectively, languages, machines, the arts, laws, sciences, moral codes, religions, philosophies. Although man has indeed been destructive, he has been constructive as well. He

shares within his own nature the universal creative power.

The creative task of man is not yet finished. Surely we would not say that we have now reached the final goal of achievement in our civilization. The existing economic, political, social, and international systems in the world are not the highest possible of attainment. It is probable that many thousands of years lie ahead in which our planet will still be fit for human habitation. If we do not destroy ourselves by war or otherwise, the great opportunity remains for us to advance life to higher ends, to develop a superior civilization. In so doing we become conscious agents of the age-long creative process. We carry forward the evolution of life. We become creators instead of being mere creatures. We not only live within the vast and enduring cosmos, but it also lives, to a degree, in and through us. In religious language we can say with the apostle Paul, "We are fellow-laborers together with God." Such may be the magnificent view and vision of our relation to human society and to the universe.

The next step is to see how, by our creative imagination, we can envisage a more humane world, a "federation of the world" of Tennyson, a "kingdom of righteousness" of the Old and New Testaments. "Where there is no

vision," the book of Proverbs says, "the people perish." Not content with the present, we must look ahead, behold a vision of finer things, dream of a brighter tomorrow. Then we can be inspired to realize the vision, the dream. It was Peter Kropotkin of Russia who said, in an address in the last century, that "the beautiful, the sublime, the spirit of life itself are on the side of those who fight for light, for humanity, for justice."

We shall now outline some specific goals to work for, beginning with the individual and concluding with international relations.

The individual: The individual as a creative person would strive to develop his whole being, not just a part thereof. He would endeavor to be physically sound, to think rationally, to appreciate and produce the beautiful, to be a self-disciplined being, to reverence the universal creative power in nature and in himself, to feel a sense of kinship with his fellowmen of whatever, race, creed, or nationality, and to be filled with enthusiasm for building the new society. "What we do," said the French thinker, Henri Bergson, "depends on what we are: but it is necessary to add that we are, to a certain extent, what we do, and

that we are creating ourselves continually."

Industry: In this field a renovation is needed. First to be considered is the social ownership of large-scale business and industry, such as steel, railroads, telephone, and electric power. The forms of ownership should be varied, including public corporations or authorities within a city, a state, a region, or the whole nation; producers' cooperatives; consumers' cooperatives. Social ownership should end the need for workers to labor to pay unearned income (dividends) to absentee stockholders. Any "profit" should be used for the benefit of the industry, the workers, and the public. Secondly, the matter of control is important. Two groups should be represented on the planning board of a business or an industry: (a) The consumers (the public). In this way the consumer has a voice in determining the quality of products and services, the prices, the advertising, etc. (b) The workers would also be represented on the planning board of a business or an industry. Furthermore, in each plant, shop, or office the workers as workers would have a voice in selecting their own "boss," just as citizens now have in the field of government. Thus workers would no more be servants of an employer class (the master-servant relation),

but instead would be elevated to the dignity of responsible citizens of an industrial democracy.

Race: The problem of the relation between members of different races is serious in many lands. What are the facts about race as discovered by many scientists? The black, red, white, brown, and yellow races, and their varying mixtures make up the single human species. All the races have a common origin and ancestry. No one race can be said to have been born inherently superior in every way to other races. Within each race, for example, there are different degrees of intelligence. These facts make it reasonable to work for the equal treatment of races. Each individual, regardless of his race, should have equal rights to employment, housing, schooling, voting, holding political office, using transportation facilities. Any laws prohibiting intermarriage of persons of different races should be repealed, because it is a natural law that members of the same species can interbreed. Racial brotherhood should be the goal in the vision of the future. "In the gain or loss of one race," voiced James Russell Lowell, "all the rest have equal claim."

War and peace: The governments of the world should either remake the United Nations or

form a new world organization with power to do the following:

(a) Establish a world assembly to make laws dealing with relations between nations. (b) Found a world court to render decisions that are final in the case of disputes between nations. (c) Institute an international police force that would see to it that all nations abolish their weapons of warfare and remain disarmed. In this way the existing anarchy among governments would be ended because they could no longer take it upon themselves to make war against other nations. Such a world government would aim at abolishing war and maintaining peace. It would exist for the "healing of the nations."

The creative view and vision, to sum up, means that the inherent power of the universe is creative. This power operates on all levels of reality, including the nonliving, the living, and the mental levels. It produces the new from the old, including man from lower animal life.

But man is more than just a product, because he partakes in a measure of the universal creative power by means of his endowment of imagination, will, and intelligence. As shown by his achievements throughout history, he is also a creator.

Looking ahead, we can make a

much more humane civilization than now exists. We can continually strive to reshape ourselves and the economic, political, social, and international orders. We can carry forward nature's evolution-

ary process on our planet to still higher ends. By doing so we relate ourselves organically and actively to mankind and the evolving universe. Such is the creative view and vision.

Our Superstitions Are Defeating U. S.

LOWELL H. COATE

FROM every direction we are being bombarded daily with the humiliating information that the United States has suddenly become "a second rate power" because it has lost the race with the U.S.S.R. to be first in launching space satellites. This news stares at us from the headlines and it is blasted at us from our radios and T.V. sets almost every hour of the day. But never do we read or hear a single word as to the real cause of this humiliation.

The sad fact is that our orthodox religions here in the United States for more than three hundred years have opposed and retarded the development of science in our country and throughout the world with their unscientific dogmas. From the days of Darwin down to Bill Bryan, Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, and the other billies, it has been a battle for open-mindedness, for the scientific method, and

for the scientific facts against ancient creeds and blind superstitions. For example, Bryan boasted that he was "more interested in the Rock of Ages than in the age of the rocks." It has been "revelation" against the test tube, the telescope, the microscope, and the laboratory. It is the age-old conflict between science and religion.

With such an attitude on the part of our Fundamentalists, with the long struggle to get science into our public schools as well as into our church schools, the study of science has not had the backing it needed. Consequently it has not had the appeal for youth which it should have had. With the churches telling our children that scientists are godless and damned; with ignorance, dogma, and bigotry dominating our religious thought rather than the open-mindedness required in scientific study, our century of

national folly, since the days of Darwin is now catching up with us.

Only forty years ago Russia was 60 per cent illiterate. She lost over 25,000,000 killed in two World Wars. But the leaders of her revolution, godless though they were, were intelligent enough to recognize that progress in a scientific age depended on scientific education. These leaders refused to let the minds of the people be poisoned against science by the inculcation of unproved dogmas and absurd superstitions. We now see the result. They have accomplished more in forty years than we have in three hundred years. While we lagged they leaped ahead. Russia, in the scientific education of her youth and in her present accomplishments, has outdistanced all the religiously orthodox nations.

Perhaps some comparisons might be beneficial at this point. According to the November 15th issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, if your child were in Russia today, this is what he would face in school: in the fourth grade, biology; fifth grade, a foreign language; sixth grade, physics, algebra, geometry; seventh grade, astronomy and calculus. The Soviets have worked out a hard-boiled and efficient school system. Stress is on work, not on "life adjustment." Perhaps you wonder

how a nation with a high degree of illiteracy only a generation ago, today appears to lead the world in science. The same publication then raises these questions: How has the Soviet Union managed to make the strides it has in education? Do its methods differ from those in the United States? Is stress placed upon developing a "rounded personality," with many so-called frills, or is training in the fundamentals?

The first comprehensive and objective study designed to answer these and other similar questions was made public November 10th by the U.S. Office of Education. The basic points developed by this study are outlined by Marion B. Folsom, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Eisenhower Cabinet. Mr. Folsom reports as follows:

Russian children tend to get more hours of instruction in their 10-year elementary and secondary system of schools than our children receive in 12 years, from first grade through high school.

All Russian students, under the compulsory Russian curriculum, are introduced to biology in the fourth grade. They start foreign languages in the fifth grade. Physics, algebra and geometry come in the sixth grade. Chemistry is taught in the tenth grade, which is the

last year of their secondary school.

All Russian students graduating from the tenth grade in 1955 had completed five years of physics, four years of chemistry, six years of foreign language, and five years of mathematics above the level of arithmetic. In the same year, less than one third of American high-school graduates had taken a single year of chemistry. About 1 in 4 had had a single year of physics. Only 1 in 15 had taken advanced mathematics.

The most qualified Russian high-school graduates (about 30 per cent) are offered higher education. All but the poorest students are actually paid for going to college. Each year the average Russian college student gets twice as many hours of actual instruction as the American college student.

This is the system that is turning out nearly 225,000 physicists, engineers, and other professionals each year. If Washington is anxious to "catch up" with Soviet science and engineering, its responsible leaders should note several relevant items. First, Soviet elementary schools, high schools, junior colleges, and universities are emphasizing mathematics, science, and foreign languages, at the same time that

United States education is dropping them from the course of study. Also an article in the *New York Times* Sunday magazine for September 15, 1957, reported that only 165 of the 1,800 colleges in the United States teach the Russian language to some 4,000 students, while 10 million Soviet students are studying English. Again, the *British Bookseller* gives the yearly output of book titles of different books published as 11,901 for the United States and 50,109 for the Soviet Union. And last, the Soviet Union graduates yearly about two and one half times as many scientists and engineers as does the United States. These are facts which should not only challenge our American youth but also very seriously impress those educational leaders who are responsible for our educational program in the United States.

The general attitude of our American youth may also have some bearing on this whole situation. It is interesting and enlightening to read the results of a survey recently made by the Y.M.C.A. of Chicago among 32,000 teen-agers in which the "Y" attempted to rank the interests of youth in the order of their appeal. To rank sixteen interests in order of their importance to them, these 32,000 youth put "clothes and personal appearance" first, "sports" second, "going around with people

my own age" third, and "parties and dances" fourth.

The really serious interests of adults ranked very low in the estimation of these 32,000 youth. "Current events" ranked ninth; "politics and political affairs" ranked fifteenth; "science and scientific things" ranked tenth; an interest in religion was well down the list of their interests. We should not be surprised that the more important interests as seen by youth seem rather frivolous to the eyes of adults. After all, our newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and orthodox organizations inculcating supernatural myths do a rather good job of brainwashing our youth to keep them juvenile.

What can we do to assure that youth does not remain a mass of individuals of arrested development? How can we help youth grow into adults with genuine interests? And how can we catch up with the Russians in their scientific advance? The answer is clear. We must have less insistence on supernaturalism and more on naturalism. We must have more intense scientific investigation and less "revelation." We must become more and more emancipated from the intellectual blight of the blind bigots who

damn science and the findings of science. We must not be handicapped in the scientific education of our children and of our young men and women by orthodox religionists who insist that scientific methods and scientific findings are sin and that scientists, as such, are godless and damned.

We are already hearing over the radio expressions of serious forebodings on the part of various religious leaders, who seriously fear "a great loss of faith" among the churches because of this new emphasis on science and scientific developments. This attitude was particularly expressed by leaders at the great National Conference in St. Louis where all the leading Protestant churches were represented.

If we Americans are serious about retaining our democracy, if we really want to achieve and maintain intellectual superiority and leadership, then we must do an about-face at once and begin to acquire a genuine respect and appreciation for science. We must resolutely oppose the influence of the bigoted "revelationists" in our education which in the past has prevented our advancement and still does in the present. That is the lesson of this hour for us Americans.

BOOKMAN'S NOTEBOOK

CHARLES W. PHILLIPS

THE ECLIPSE OF GOD

"... the eclipse of God, such indeed is the character of the historic hour through which the world is passing." This is from Martin Buber's *Eclipse of God*, Harper's Torchbooks, \$1.15. The book has a lot of values for the liberal, but the one we wish to promote here is that which is heavily signified by the title, "Eclipse of God." The title says, and the text develops it considerably, that "God" in our times is in a considerable state of obscurity. To Buber, the obscurity is so profound that he almost, but not quite, despairs of its being lifted. So he uses the word "eclipse" and expects it someday to be lifted. Yet for the moment, "God"—reality and symbol—is difficult to talk about with any confidence that the discussion will be intelligent, enlightening, or otherwise helpful.

Many a liberal will think "This is nothing new. We have been struggling with that in our humanist-theist controversies for a long time." And so we have. Yet we can welcome and look with profit to what Buber represents (and as we shall note presently, he is powerfully joined by others) for at least two reasons: (1) Here is at least a powerful confirmation of the reasons for the tensions we Unitarians feel and often express, coming from non-Unitarian sources. Buber is a highly respected name, in Judaism and Christianity. Tillich is obviously

heavily indebted to him. We just have to admit that men like these can say some things to orthodoxy that we cannot say with the same hope of communicating. We ought to welcome their doing it, and ought to welcome the implication of greater substance that it gives to our controversies. Buber and Tillich sometimes defend atheism. Sometimes, says Tillich, only atheism can make a radically religious protest. In the work cited above, Buber declares that atheism is not the real antagonist of faith or God, but occasionally "it must reject hitherto existing images of God." The real enemy is "gnosis" or a psychological way of dealing with such matters. (2) Which leads to the second reason why this book is useful to us, namely, that the cause of the debacle in re "God" is primarily the trend in the Modern Period, to reduce reality to a subjective picture, and to make religion primarily a matter of psychologizing. This is the familiar existentialist protest (and in a somewhat more ambiguous way, also the pragmatic protest) against idealistic philosophy and against a simple projection of images, compensations, wish-fulfillments, reflecting personal guilts, fears, social relations, prejudices, and what not. For a great deal of the usages of "God," these men have just as much a "humanistic" protest as any of us. Yet at the same time they apply a more sharply realistic critique to all psy-

chologies and to all social collectivisms which might bid to be substitutes for "God." This is good medicine for us to be aware of at least, and maybe take some. For them, God is in "eclipse"; God is hard to name; many, nay most, usages are pernicious. Yet they do not say with Nietzsche that "God is dead." They would suspect all capitalizations of "Man" as leading to collective coercion of men.

Before going on to a word on Tillich here, we would indicate that most of the Buber writing is coming out now in paperback. It will not cost you much to own it. If you want a comprehensive study of him, however, the book is *The Life of Dialogue*, by Maurice S. Friedman, University of Chicago Press, 1955 (\$6.00). In spite of its cost, this book might well be in a serious minister's library, or at least read. It is truly remarkable the extent and depth to which this Jewish philosopher has influenced Christian theologians. His I-Thou development is now being very self-consciously used to reorient all Anglican theological education, for example. From Heim and Barth, to Tillich and Niebuhr, and on to the Catholic, Marcel, all use Buber freely. And yet this man is not a "Christian." Although he makes as appreciative statements about Jesus as anyone could wish, he could never make this "Christ" the unique focal point of all history. In short, there is a tension here highly worth understanding for its own sake, and it may well help us to improve our constructive and polemic position. Incidentally, Friedman objects to the overly-

Protestant cast given to Buber by Will Herberg in much of his popular writing.

We would move now briefly to Tillich. Probably a minister or a studious layman should divide up his living and get, and gird up his loins and read, Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, two volumes of which are now out by the University of Chicago Press, with a third and final volume yet to come. We say "probably" one should, for here is the most complete and subtle Christian systematics of our time. We should predict that it is going to stand as some kind of a monument, although which of two kinds we are not sure. Our guess is that it will either stand as at least the way in which a distinctive Christian theology can be saved and made viable for our time, or it will brilliantly show the impossibility of such. It will be the last major work defining the end of "the Protestant Era," a period which Tillich himself has some doubts about.

If one is going to read but one thing of Tillich's, however, or choose something less forbidding in bulk and style as the way to make an approach, we heartily recommend his *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, University of Chicago Press, 1952. The book is slight, being but 85 pages. It is Tillich at his clearest and simplest. It is a really honest and candid confrontation of philosophical language and biblical language. Tillich's point, of course, is that it is neither necessary nor possible to separate them. This gets him into some trouble with Christian theologians. The

only criticism of his first volume of *Systematic Theology*, which he seemed to care to answer with some sharpness in the preface to the second volume, was his insistence upon hanging onto and using philosophical analysis. Conversely, some who do not quite see the necessity of his jumping to theological idiom (biblical to him) criticize him for that. In any case the issue is put clearly in the slim essay just cited. Read in the context of the Buber material, it is very stimulating. For our own part, Tillich has made the case so well for philosophy and the religiousness it may develop, that it is somewhat beyond us why one cannot find the "light of the world" through other idiom and revelation than "Christ." Be that as it may, you can decide for yourself, with only a moderate amount of stimulating and rewarding reading in Buber and Tillich, the living deans of Jewish and Christian theological thought, respectively.

If you think you are able, or, beyond that, if you think it wise, to by-pass and pay no attention to "theology" any more, you can face the real problems they do try to face, in terms of Albert Camus, recent recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature. Camus is next to the youngest ever to get the prize, and to date has produced the slightest body of work upon which it has been given. Since his only junior was Rudyard Kipling, the amount of Camus' writing more than stands up. It does anyway, for here surely is one of the most preëminent religious, albeit secular, minds of our time.

Two of his works are in paperback from Knopf, Vintage series: a novel, *The Stranger*, and a long essay, *The Rebel*. You can afford these, and maybe the hardback, *The Fall*, Knopf, \$3.00. The latter is a kind of novel, although a long narrative monologue by one Jean Baptiste Clamence to a companion, between gins and walks along the quays and streets of Amsterdam. It is an allegory about the state of man in the modern world. With tremendous economy (137 pp.) he creates remarkable effects in evocation and judgment. At one point, the judgment of modern man is devastating and meant to be "exhaustive." The sum of it is that modern man "fornicates and reads the newspapers." Camus is nothing, if not a moralist, however, although he is a moralist who cannot buy any conventional code of right or left. He is bitter about totalitarianisms, satirical about bourgeois mores and conventions on friendship and love. He is contemptuous of the atheistic "freethinkers." At the end, however, he turns organized Christianity upside down. After a very sensitive, appreciative treatment of Jesus, he makes the passage of founding the Church on Peter an act of supreme irony, for being founded precisely upon Peter's cowardice and hypocrisy. Camus fully absorbs, but is trying to get beyond the "existentialist predicament." In *The Fall*, he sharpens the ethical problem. How can a man forgive himself? He cannot, but if so who can? It demands implication in the lives of others, but what terms do not lead one down

the old dead ends? Camus is demanding love and mutuality without sacrificing individuality. Here he is constructively reaching, within the human scene, beyond existentialism. Also in his moralism, which denies him the comfort many of them have in the nihilism of their negative commitments, he is beyond, sounder, healthier. Here is sensitivity and acuteness which leave one thinking a long, long while.

The Rebel spends most of its time, tracing the idea of authority in the Modern Period and its breakdown in terms of the idea of God. Here from a different point of view, but to the same end, we come again to the eclipse of God. It is not clear to us yet whether or not Camus thinks that God is dead. Dethronement has been real enough, and, moreover, regardless of freedom's case against some tyrannies with alleged divine sanction, freedom to date has not been able to check itself short of increasing murder and destruction. Camus does not appeal to God. He is appealing to more than Man, in terms of "a strange form of love." It is to this that man as a "rebel"—and man must be a rebel—must appeal. Man *needs* salvation. Man *should* be saved. Camus is a universalist however. There can be no salvation of one, if there is not salvation for all. The concluding section of *The Rebel*, entitled "Thought At the Meridian," is a beautiful, eloquent plea for a humanistic morality. His is an extremely sensitive, acutely critical,

and basically optimistic conscience. There seems to be something else yet that he has to say. It is exhilarating, as well as highly informing, to come with him to his present brink.

We want to make the briefest mention of F. A. Heinemann's *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament*, Harper's Torchbooks, \$1.25. This is now, to our mind, the best secondary treatment of the subject in a small, inexpensive form. Heinemann is the Philosophy and Theology editor of the *Hibbert Journal* and is the man, it appears, who first coined the term "existenz philosophy" in modern times. Fully appreciative of its uses, and a good long ways from being a shallow iconoclast with it, he nevertheless finds that existentialism as a self-sufficient philosophy is dead. Those who want to get to his end here, without going through the means and the awareness of much that called forth that protest, will not find comfort. Existentialism may be dead, but the problems of metaphysics are not. We need fresh construction here. Heinemann does not essay that constructive task. He is not sure it is fully possible at the moment, except to say that the direction has to be clear. The morass existentialism got into was that, from Kierkegaard to Sartre, it could not protect itself from a prevalent attitude of "man against himself." We just have to go on to an attitude of "man *with* himself; man *with* man; man *with* the world; man *with* God." Which is, of course easier said than done.

Western Unitarian Conference

700 Oakwood Boulevard, Chicago 15, Illinois

ELLSWORTH M. SMITH, *Executive Secretary*

"Let's Take a Second Look!"

American Unitarianism began emotionally as a wholesale rejection of a morbid orthodox evangelism. It was given intellectual form and content by a group of young ministers who were also scholars and who had become convinced of the unitarian rather than trinitarian nature of deity. Because most of the ministers and people who formed the first body of Unitarianism in America were educated, cultured, and economically secure, beginning Unitarianism tended not to be revolutionary, but basically conservative in its outlook. Nevertheless, the strong-mindedness of Emerson, Channing, Parker, and a sizable company of their colleagues gave American Unitarianism an unmistakable character and a sense of mission.

The American Unitarian Association, formed in 1825, was directed to the primary task of printing and distributing pamphlets. Early Unitarians were prolific writers and publishers, and their works exhibit great vitality even today. Our national headquarters, closely allied with the then-Unitarian Harvard Divinity School, sent out representatives to and beyond the Alleghenies to establish and serve new churches. Within five years several new churches were organized.

Unfortunately, the young di-

vinity school graduates did not stay long in their first parishes in the cruder new cities of the West, but returned after two or three years to the familiar and comfortable patterns and parishes of New England. The West was forced to discover and develop its own leadership. The lack of continuity of New England leadership in Western Unitarianism prevented the determination of Unitarian development in the West by the headquarters group.

In the West there burgeoned many liberal movements, even radical movements, that were characterized by a humanistic philosophy and by the preëminence of a social ethic over theology. At the very time various groups of European liberals were fleeing to Midwestern America from the abortive revolutions of 1848 and were here organizing under such designations as "The Society of Free Men" and "The Free Congregation" (most of them humanist to the core), the Western Unitarian Conference was being born.

Western Conference Unitarians were strongly humanistic in their emphasis from the beginning. They welcomed many of the new in-migrant liberals whose only religion was Humanism and political and social liberalism. During the span of a few years most of the Western Conference Unitarian churches rephrased their

platforms or statements of purpose in ethical rather than theological language.

Some sorts and degrees of conflict between Western Unitarians and New England Unitarians were inevitable, and did develop. The Western Unitarian Conference was for many years the only sizable, regional administrative Unitarian body except for the American Unitarian Association itself. The Western Conference once stretched from Albany, New York, to Salt Lake City, and there is a story of a church in Maine that by formal vote affiliated itself with the Western Conference!

Unitarianism is a religion of greatest freedom. Without creed, revelation or ecclesiastical authority it truly offers to the individual complete freedom of individual belief. Difficult to describe in terms of the traditional dictionary definitions of religion, we find affinity and *lebensraum* in the new American College Dictionary definition of religion as "the quest for the values of the ideal life." It is to our credit that, under a charter so broad and seemingly general, modern Unitarianism has developed so great a sense of meaning, value, vitality, and initiative.

It was not always so. The church I am most familiar with probably had as large a membership soon after it was formed in 1830 as it did one hundred years later. This was typical of our history. There were periods of growth, then a leveling off, then slow decline. Without doubt the weakness in our situation was the lack of an organized sense of our central

meanings. When we had growth we did not organize to nurture it and "include it in."

During the 1930's we went through a period of expertly-guided self-study. We needed organization, that was certain, but we needed vitality in our organizational forms even more. To achieve this purpose the Commission of Appraisal recommended decentralization, not only as a means of developing and nurturing new growth but as a means of building strength for the national organization! This double purpose of Regionalism has not always been recognized. For instance, it is possible to have a strong regional organization without a strong national organization but it is impossible to have a strong national organization without strong regional organizations. This principle becomes more inevitably true and functional as the size of a national movement increases.

For whatever it is worth to our thinking today, the source of Unitarianism is in the independent-minded, free-thinking individual and his family engaged in the quest for the values of the ideal life. There are many evidences for this statement. For instance, the amazing membership list of the Unitarian Church of the Larger Fellowship. The letters that come to the Clerk of this "church" are vivid human documents attesting to the vitality with which individual families hold their Unitarian beliefs and their joy in vicarious association. Again, the growth of the Fellowship movement, as independent a de-

velopment of religious organization as the world has ever seen on an orderly basis. The amount of determination and self-determination exhibited by our Fellowships is fantastic in the history of religious institutions. Though there is always a person or a family who is the prime mover, the beginnings of many Fellowships most closely resemble spontaneous combustion! We who are the Organization Men of Unitarianism sometimes have to ask all around to find out how a Fellowship really started! Are further evidences needed of the real source of Unitarianism?

Let us trace the "flow." A young woman visited a Unitarian church, signed the Guest Book, had a cup of coffee, and then signed the Membership Book with the following explanation: "I had read a bit about Unitarianism and heard about it. I had my own peculiar religious ideas. What I have found here not only fulfills but exceeds my expectations!" That was several years ago. That young woman, her husband, and children are today involved in responsible ways in almost every phase of the program of the church. The immediate and most vital areas for expression of the Unitarian spirit are the local church or fellowship.

Time was when we were so small a denomination that a single, national headquarters was all we could manage or make good use of. Now, the picture is far different.

The Western Unitarian Conference, the first of the regional organizations, is perhaps also more

mature in its organizational life. Operating in sixteen north central states, the central office in Chicago, with a part or full-time Executive Secretary and someone to "man" the typewriter, was all we needed or could make good use of in the earlier years. As recently as ten years ago we had fifty-five or sixty churches in our sixteen states. But now we have fifty-eight churches and over sixty Fellowships. New Fellowships are formed or develop at an alarming rate. How fortunate that our own Western Conference Appraisal Committee seven years ago saw good sense in recommending the formation of Sub-regional or Area Conferences. We already had the Iowa Unitarian Association of long standing, and there were other traces.

Now we have eight Area Conferences within the Region known as the Western Conference. At the risk of seeming redundant, let us recall that the Western Unitarian Conference is an autonomous organization that voluntarily acts as an organized Region of the American Unitarian Association, and that the eight Area Conferences are autonomous and cooperative portions of the Western Unitarian Conference.

The Area Conferences, since their formalization in 1951, have had an uneven but vital growth. Some of them are now rendering services to the churches and Fellowships that were once rendered only by the national organization, and for a long time rendered by the regional organization. This is a natural development, charac-